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**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY CHARGES 20 MEMBERS OF BRONX
CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION WITH DRUG TRAFFICKING, FIREARMS,
AND MONEY LAUNDERING OFFENSES**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, JANICE K. FEDARCYK, the Assistant Director-in-Charge of the New York Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), and RAYMOND W. KELLY, the Police Commissioner of the City of New York ("NYPD"), today announced charges against 20 individuals for drug trafficking, firearms, and money laundering offenses allegedly committed in connection with the operation of a criminal organization in the Bronx, New York. The following individuals were arrested today in the Bronx: LEVIT FERNANDINI, LUIS APONTE, ALBERT FRANCO, JAMES RIVERA, JULIO GOMEZ, LUIS ORTIZ, WILLIAM ROSA, and LUCY ROMERO. CHRISTOPHER ALICEA, DANIEL ROMAN, and EFRAIN IRIZARRY were arrested today in Puerto Rico. HECTOR GARCIA, RAFAEL REYES and JOSE LUIS MORAN were already in custody on related charges, and LNU aka "Jesse," ANTHONY TORRES, and ELIAS POLANCO remain at large. Today's charges are the culmination of a year-long law enforcement operation led by the FBI and NYPD.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA said: "Over the past five years, these defendants allegedly built a drug empire in the Bronx, using guns and violence to protect their operation and terrorize a neighborhood. With today's charges, we are taking an important step forward in dismantling this criminal

operation and cleaning up the streets, so neighborhood residents and can live in peace instead of fear."

FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge JANICE K. FEDARCYK said: "Today's arrests are the latest phase in an on-going campaign to restore Bronx neighborhoods to their law-abiding residents. No matter where you live in this city, you have the right to the peaceful enjoyment of your home. Criminal enterprises like this one invariably resort to guns and violence to conduct their illicit business. The FBI and our partners remain committed to policing drug enterprises, which peddle poison and degrade our neighborhoods."

NYPD Commissioner RAYMOND W. KELLY said: "Operating within a block of a K through 5 elementary school in the Bronx, these individuals sold cocaine and marijuana and used guns and violence to further their illegal drug trade. I commend the NYPD detectives, federal agents and U.S. Attorney's Office for removing these violent drug dealers from our streets."

According to the Indictment unsealed today in Manhattan federal court:

For at least five years, the defendants operated a retail narcotics distribution ring in the vicinity of Creston Avenue in the Bronx, New York. During that time, the organization was responsible for the distribution of more than five kilograms of cocaine and more than 1,000 kilograms of marijuana. As part of the conspiracy, some members of the organization carried and discharged firearms to protect the group's narcotics territory, while others laundered the organization's narcotics proceeds.

Federal and local law enforcement officers executed court-authorized search warrants today on five locations tied to many of the named defendants. During the arrests and searches, ammunition, a police scanner, pounds of marijuana, marijuana growing equipment, cocaine, scales, packaging materials, cutting agents, and tens of thousands of dollars in United States Currency.

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The case is assigned to U.S. District Judge PAUL A. CROTTY. A chart setting forth the charges in the Indictment and the applicable penalties is attached.

Mr. BHARARA thanked the FBI, the NYPD, and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) for their outstanding work in

this case. He also thanked the IRS Criminal Investigation Division for their assistance in the investigation.

The prosecution is being handled by the Office's Violent Crimes Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys JESSICA A. MASELLA and TELEMACHUS P. KASULIS are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

11-204

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U.S. v. Fernandini, et al.

	CHARGE	DEFENDANTS	PENALTIES
1	Conspiracy to distribute over five kilograms of cocaine and over 1,000 kilograms of marijuana	LEVIT FERNANDINI, PABLO IVAN SANTIAGO, OMAR CASTRO LOPEZ, MAURICIO VILLAREAL, HECTOR GARCIA, LUIS APONTE, ALBERT FRANCO, JAMES RIVERA, FNU LNU (aka "Jesse") JULIO GOMEZ, ANTHONY TORRES, RAFAEL REYES, LUIS ORTIZ, JOSE LUIS MORAN, WILLIAM ROSA, LUCY ROMERO, ELIAS POLANCO, CHRISTOPHER ALICEA, DANIEL ROMAN, EFRAIN IRIZARRY	Maximum: Life in prison Mandatory minimum: 10 years in prison
2	Possession, use, and discharge of firearms	LEVIT FERNANDINI, HECTOR GARCIA	Maximum: Life in prison Consecutive mandatory minimum: 10 years in prison
3	Conspiracy to launder narcotics proceeds	OMAR CASTRO LOPEZ, LUIS ORTIZ	Maximum: 20 years in prison

DEFENDANT	RESIDENCE	AGE
LEVIT FERNANDINI	Bronx, NY	32
PABLO IVAN SANTIAGO	Orlando, FL	46
OMAR CASTRO LOPEZ		35
MAURICIO VILLAREAL	Brownsville, TX	22

HECTOR GARCIA	Puerto Rico / Bronx, NY	24
LUIS APONTE	Bronx, NY	31
ALBERT FRANCO	Bronx, NY	32
JAMES RIVERA	Bronx, NY	35
FNU LNU (aka "Jesse")		
JULIO GOMEZ	Bronx, NY	31
ANTHONY TORRES	Bronx, NY	32
RAFAEL REYES	Bronx, NY	30
LUIS ORTIZ	Bronx, NY	34
JOSE LUIS MORAN	Bronx, NY	37
WILLIAM ROSA	Elmsford, NY	39
LUCY ROMERO	Bronx, NY	36
ELIAS POLANCO	Bronx, NY	19
CHRISTOPHER ALICEA	Puerto Rico	29
DANIEL ROMAN	Puerto Rico	32
EFRAIN IRIZARRY	Puerto Rico	34